



News Release

U.S. Department of Labor | August 5, 2015

MSHA calls for stepped-up enforcement after accidents claim 3 miners' lives *Deadly 24-hour period prompts closer scrutiny of mining deaths*

ARLINGTON, Va. – In the wake of a deadly day in mining in which three miners lost their lives in separate incidents in Nevada, North Dakota and Virginia on Aug. 3, the [Mine Safety and Health Administration](#) is stepping up enforcement efforts and intensifying outreach and education nationwide.

In a conference call with industry stakeholders today, [Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health Joseph A. Main](#) expressed his concern over the alarming number of recent deaths. “In the past month alone, there have been five fatalities in the metal and nonmetal industry. Not since 2002 have three miners died in a single day in this mining sector. We cannot – we will not – accept this turn of events. We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of the miners who died in these tragic accidents,” said Main.

The following incidents all occurred on Aug. 3:

- A loader operator was engulfed by a stockpile failure while standing outside his vehicle at a construction sand and gravel mine in North Dakota.
- A miner at an underground gold ore operation in Nevada was killed when he was struck by mobile equipment.
- An 18-year-old plant operator was buried under tons of sand and stone dust when a silo collapsed at a quarry in Virginia. MSHA has launched investigations into the causes of each of these fatalities.

Main announced that, beginning next week, the agency will begin beefed-up inspections with a focus on violations commonly associated with mining deaths, and federal inspectors will emphasize “walk and talks” with miners and operators to disseminate information on fatalities and best practices for preventing them. MSHA coal mine inspectors, along with training and educational field personnel, will be tapped to assist in the initiative.

“We will need everyone’s cooperation with these efforts to reverse the trend in mining deaths,” said Main. “Our miners deserve nothing less.”

In 2014, there were 29 deaths at metal and nonmetal mines and 15 to date this year. “MSHA inspectors will intensify their examination of the types of conditions leading to these deaths and take appropriate enforcement actions,” said Main.

Recent fatalities and other accidents at metal and nonmetal mines suggest that miners would benefit from rigorous workplace examinations conducted by experienced and trained examiners. On July 22, MSHA published a [program policy letter](#) clarifying the requirements for workplace examinations. The requirements are as follows:

U.S. Department of Labor news materials are accessible at <http://www.dol.gov>. The department’s [Reasonable Accommodation Resource Center](#) converts departmental information and documents into alternative formats, which include Braille and large print. For alternative format requests, please contact the department at (202) 693-7828 (voice) or (800) 877-8339 (federal relay).

- Mine operators must examine each working place at least once each shift for conditions which adversely affect safety or health.
- The examination must be conducted by a competent person.
- A record of the examination must be maintained and made available for review.

Media Contact:

Amy Louviere, 202-693-9423, louviere.amy@dol.gov

Release Number: 15-1550-NAT